

## **i wanna dance with somebody by richiewheeler (gayrefrain)**

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Prompt: eleven is popular And mike feels insecure about it (she gonna chose being popular over him) but she chooses him

## i wanna dance with somebody

### Author's Note:

- For [elsaack](#).

here is the [tumblr link](#)

Mike Wheeler walks into science class to see everyone chattering, which is massively different from the typical dead-eyed stares of Mr. Sherman's physics class. It's the first class of the day, and Mr. Sherman speaks the way Gray looks, so it makes sense.

Mike takes his normal spot by Dustin Henderson, their bard and only member of the party he has in this class. "What's up with everyone today?"

"They're announcing the nominees for Homecoming Court during class," Dustin says, looking bored. "It's all bullshit, but everyone else is excited."

Mike sneers a little as he grabs his notebook. Homecoming Court is so stupid, just a meaningless popularity contest. Besides the Snow Ball in middle school, he and the members of The Party haven't been to a dance. El Hopper, his girlfriend and the mage of their Party, finds them too crowded, and the rest of them don't care.

It honestly works out. Mike doesn't need to waste his precious free time getting bullied at school when he doesn't need to be.

"Settle down, settle down," Mr. Sherman begins, already droning on as he sets up at his desk. "I know everyone is excited for the court announcement..."

Mike and Dustin share a look.

"But education takes precedence-"

"*HELLO HAWKINS HIGH!*" The exuberant voice of Lucas Sinclair, their ranger, says over the loudspeakers. As an aid for the main office, he helps make the announcements every day. People cheer

and clap, stomping their feet. *“So I know it’s early for the announcements of the Homecoming Court, but come on? Were you really thinking of anything else?”*

Everyone but Mike and Dustin lean forward in anticipation.

*“To put you all at ease, here are the nominees for Homecoming Kings. We got Jack Callahan, Owen King, Greg McCorkle and James Zwinski.”*

Dustin makes a face and mouths, “James?”

Mike makes a similar face and kicks his head back a little. What a waste of time. He can almost believe that he’d rather be listening to Sherman.

*“As for our Queens, we got: Shayla Britt, Jennifer Elway, Jennifer Hayes, and- holy shit- Jane Hopper? What?”* Lucas laughs, not in a mean way but in a purely surprised way. *“No way! El, El! You could be goddamn Homecoming Queen-”*

*“Mr. Sinclair, that is enough!”* Someone wrestles the microphone away as everyone laughs. *“Classes may resume, sorry for any disruption. Congrats to the nominees.”*

Mike, meanwhile, is frozen in place. El? His El? A Homecoming Queen?

Something twists in his stomach.

“Holy shit,” Dustin says, laughing a little as everyone chatters. Sherman seems to be resigned to letting them chat. “Can you believe it?”

And in the smallest voice, Mike manages to answer, “No.”

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Luckily, the Party all have the same lunch period, so Mike makes sure to find El. She’s already at their table in the corner of the cafeteria, eating the homemade lunch she and Hopper pack each morning.

“Hey, babe,” He starts to greet her, but Jennifer Hayes cuts him off.

“Congratulations on the nomination, Jane!” She greets, since only people in their friend group call her El.

El, who was looking at her sandwich, looks back up. “Thank you. You too,” She says, a bit slowly. Mike takes his seat next to her, because he knows she’s only this careful with her words if she’s unsure about how to react, even three years now with normal interaction.

Jennifer Hayes waves and is gone just like that. Finally.

El turns to him and scrunches her nose slightly, “She’s the fifth person to do that in three minutes.”

“Did you run for Homecoming Queen and not tell me?” He blurts out. She looks at him, concerned, as he tries to babble an explanation, “Well, it’s just, I had no idea and you didn’t tell me-”

“I didn’t run,” El interrupts, not brusque just honest. Thanks to the presidential election a couple years ago, she knows the difference between run politically and run the action. “I don’t know why my name is there.”

“Because you’re cool and mysterious,” Dustin says as he sits down with his tray of cafeteria food. “And you have a tattoo which, no offense, makes you hot.”

“I can’t believe you’re a nominee,” Lucas says as he and Max Mayfield, their zoomer and Lucas’s girlfriend, sit down with their own trays of food across from them. “I nearly shit my pants laughing.”

“We heard you,” Max rolls her eyes to the ceiling with a smirk. Lucas flicks her ear.

“It’s crazy,” Will Byers, their cleric and final member of their Party (excluding Steve Harrington who’s their rogue since he works a real job now), plops down on the other side of El. “I didn’t know you were running.”

“Neither did I,” El says. “It’s weird. People keep-”

“Hey, Jane,” Greg McCorkle comes up to them. The Party all stare at

him like he's an alien that just landed in front of them. "I, um, just wanted to say, congrats. You know. On the nomination. We could both win, wouldn't that be crazy?" He laughs a little.

"It'd be crazy," She agrees. Max snickers. "But good luck to you."

"Thanks," Greg says. Mike frowns to himself when the blonde kid doesn't immediately leave. Normally, people don't come up to them at all.

Well, none of his friends have ever been up for a popularity contest before.

"Can I talk to you? Over here?" He points off to the nearby hallway.

El nods and they go off.

"Aren't you going too, Wheeler?" Lucas asks, mouth full with an apple.

"No?" Mike doesn't meant to sound so abashed but he feels out of his element. "Isn't it weird that El got nominated?"

"What do you mean?" Will asks, eyebrows furrowing.

"I mean, it's not like she's *popular* really," Mike says.

"It's the mystery," Dustin says, mouth full. "She's all quiet and shit. It's... fuck, what's the word- *alluring*. It's alluring."

"Stop talking about my girlfriend like that, you ass," Mike says, causing Dustin and Max to laugh. "I'm worried! This might be a bullying thing."

"Like *Carrie*?" Lucas asks, eyes widening. "Do you think people nominated her only to pour pig's blood on her?"

"Pig's blood on who?" El asks as she sits down.

"On you," Dustin says. "Like in *Carrie*."

El, familiar with the movie, looks concerned, eyes wide. "Am I going

to be Carrie?”

“No way in *fuck* are we letting that happen,” Max says. Mike nods as well, grabbing her free hand with his to reassure her.

“Actually, I want to see that-” Dustin says, but when Mike gives him an incredulous look, he rephrases, “I want to see you telekinetically kick ass! Not the blood thing!”

El smiles, “I can do that *without* pig’s blood, you know.”

Dustin growls so Mike throws a napkin at him. Thankfully, conversation turns to the AV club meeting they’re having today. But something still nags at Mike’s mind.

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Mike doesn’t get a chance to bring it up over lunch, so he has to wait until he walks El to her locker. He tries to be casual, “So. Um. What did McCorkle want?”

“To ask if I had a date to the dance,” El says as she opens her locker. Mike’s heart skips two beats, and not in the good way.

“I said no,” She continues, focusing on her task. He nearly chokes, so he’s kind of glad she’s not watching. “But then I said you were probably going to ask me, because we’re boyfriend-girlfriend.”

She looks up at him when he doesn’t say anything. “Mike, are you okay?”

Mike nods, scratching at his neck anxiously. “Yeah, babe, I’m fine-”

“Don’t lie,” She says, narrowing her eyes slightly. “You’re the one that taught me that.”

“I did,” He agrees. Deciding he couldn’t really stand to look deep into her eyes and admit his self-conscious bullshit, he kept his eyes on her hands. Her soft, tan hands that grounded him and made him float all the same. “I just- you could do so much better than me.”

“Mike-” She says immediately, but he shakes his head.

"Please, El, let me," He looks up at her. Her lips are pursed together, but she nods. He looks around at the sea of people and drags them into the AV Club room, which is thankfully empty of students or teachers.

Mike runs a hand through his hair, desperately in need of a hair cut. He paces slightly. "I just... dammit. You're so beautiful, El. And I'm just Frogface Wheeler. I'm a nerd, a geek, a fucking loser. I guess... I guess I'm just waiting for you to realize it, and for you to pick someone cool and hot or whatever. You could do so much better than me, and- I guess your nomination was just a reminder."

Mike looks at her again, and she's sitting up on their table with her legs crossed.

"Are you done?" She asks, blinking up at him. God, her eyes could do him in.

He nods.

She takes a deep breath, and grabs his wrist gently to pull him over closer to her. "Mike," She says his name softly, like one would hold something so it wouldn't break. "You tell me this like I don't know."

Mike doesn't know what to say to that. "Excuse me?"

El makes a face as her legs move to dangle off the edge of the table. "Sorry. I don't want to be mean. But I know you're smart. And I know mouth-breathing dicks make fun of you. I remember. When we were on the tracks."

Mike also remembers, each moment with El before her disappearance vivid in his mind, since he mulled them over and over. He remembers admitting he was a nerd, something he was hoping to keep secret longer than he did.

*Mike.* She had said. *I understand.*

"I remember," He says to fill the silence.

She gently leads him closer until he's standing between her knees.

"I like that you're weird," She says, her voice soft and genuine. "I like that you're different. I don't like that people hurt you, and I don't like that you won't let me stop it."

He can't help the smile that quirks his lips at that.

"But I like you. I love you," El says with her emphatic tone she uses when she needs him to understand her. "You saved me too, you know. And that means more than any crown."

He tilts his forehead to touch hers.

"I love you, El," He tells her.

She smiles and leans up and pecks his lips. "Come on. We're gonna be late."

He nods and extends a hand to help her jump off the table. Instead of letting go when her feet touch the tile, she holds his hand as they exit the room and walk to the English class they share.

"Hey, El," He asks as they stick together.

"Yes?"

"Will you go to the Homecoming with me?"

She smiles and squeezes his hand once. "Yes," She says, because she knows he'd love to hear it.

And for that moment, Mike feels fine.

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Mike's able to quell his anxieties for most of the weeks leading up to Homecoming. He calls Nancy from New York and has her help him figure out a good tie color to match with El, and when long-distance-dressing doesn't work, he enlists Hopper and Steve to help him shop.

It's kind of weird to ask your girlfriend's dad for dating assistance, but Hopper's a decent guy like that, and helps him pick out a tie without giving away his date's outfit.



The night of the dance, they're all looking their best and ready to party since they ditch the actual game event, a move they're happy to make as people who generally hate sports. (Except baseball, because Lucas is on the team.)

Lucas, also a killer dancer, tears it up with Max on the dance floor. Dustin dances with one of the actors in stage crew with him, and Will has taken over position of photographer from his brother since dances made him uncomfortable.

A bad cover of "I Think We're Alone Now" starts playing from the band on stage. But still, the song is fun.

El looks up at him as they stand near the ballot station. He picks Owen King since he's the nicest kid of the bunch for the Kings, but when it comes to putting his girlfriend down, he hesitates. He doesn't want her to win.

When she becomes Homecoming Queen, she could leave him. She could realize he's a waste of space who's been wasting her time since she escaped hell. He was just first. That doesn't mean he's last.

But he looks at her as she happily checks herself off, and he realizes it's not about him. El wants to be normal, to have experiences everyone has without her past muddying it. He won't get in the way.

He checks his girlfriend's name off and folds the paper into the ballot box.

"Do you want to dance?" She asks.

"Yes," He says. Grandly, like they were prince and princess at a ball, he takes her hand and leads her to a less-crowded section of the gym.

"I've gotten better since our first one," She says proudly as he twirls her around.

"You were always good," He assures her.

"Pretty good?" She asks with an eyebrow raise.

He scrunches his nose at her and pretends to try to stomp on her feet.

She kicks her head back and laughs. He pulls her close and they shimmy to the music. They're still not great dancers, but at least they're here together.

They dance through two more songs, switching from faux-ballroom to the Charleston and just swaying to each other.

Just as he's hoping for a real slow song to hold her close, the music cuts out entirely and a chaperone comes up to the microphone. Everyone quiets, some people still moving awkwardly without music

"Voting for the nominees is now closed. We will tally your votes and get back to you shortly," The voice is nearly as boring as Mr. Sherman's. "For now, dance."

The band starts back up again. Mike's about to teach El how to do a box step, but then Jennifer Hayes and Jenny Elway come up to them.

"Hey Jane!" They greet, shockingly in unison. "All the nominees wanted to get pictures together," Jennifer Hayes says. "Since you're a nominee, we wanted you to be there too!"

El looks at Mike. He gives her a smile he doesn't mean and nudges her gently with his elbow. "Have fun," He tells her.

She smiles and goes off with the other girls.

Someone taps his shoulder and he looks around to see Dustin standing there, tie already tugged askew.

"You okay, buddy?"

"Yeah, I'm fine," Mike lies.

Dustin rolls his eyes. "C'mon, let's go through the halls."

"Dustin-"

"Girls always take forever getting photographed, let's go."

Soon, they're roaming the empty halls, dodging the overzealous chaperone trying to catch kids trying to find a place to bone.

"You've been acting weird since El got her nomination," Dustin says. "What's up?"

Mike sighs, "It's stupid."

Dustin waits.

So he expands, "Dammit... I'm worried she's gonna pick one of those stupid kings and leave me."

Dustin says nothing for a moment, but before Mike can demand an answer, his curly-haired friend says, "Are you serious?"

"Don't be a dick."

"No, shut up now," Dustin holds up a hand. Mike exhales sharply but shuts up.

"I can't believe I have to spell this out to someone who got a near perfect on the pre-SATs, but here I go. You and El are way more than this stupid, fucking dance. You two survived a whole year apart—"

"Well, 353 days—"

"Oh my god, shut *up* about that," Dustin says, amicably exhausted. Mike should be pissed, but he smiles a little. His and El's romantic antics several years ago got them the status of "soap opera dramatic" with their friends. "The thing is... if you two and your adorable relationship could survive that, do you really think a dumbass school dance will break you up?"

Mike says nothing, mulling this over.

"Besides..." Dustin continues, then trails off. "Okay, fine, don't tell *anyone* I ever said this, but... you two have something that people don't normally get. You guys mean something to each other, and it's more than just puppy love or whatever bullshit people call it. You got it?"

Mike nods, "I got it."

"Now, go dance with your girlfriend and stop being a pussy."

“Stop being a dick,” Mike fires back, but they decide to head back to the dance. “Can I tell El you said any of that?”

“No.” But he’s smiling.

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Mike’s stomach resumes slowly digesting his heart by the time Dustin leads him back to the gym. Not because Dustin’s speech wasn’t perfect.

Because, as they enter, they hear the tail end of, “...nominees head up to the stage.” And he doesn’t know what to expect anymore.

The two of them share a look and go to push through the crowd to get closer.

He looks onstage to see his girlfriend standing there, in her pretty green dress and done-up hair with a bunch of other attractive people in a line. He’s not up there, and she is. And the visual slams him hard in the gut.

Mike watches as the chaperone pulls out the tally.

“Your winner for Homecoming King is Greg McCorkle!”

People cheer as Greg gets a crown on his head. Mike swallows.

Someone elbows his arm gently, and he looks over to see Lucas and Max flanking him. He smiles at them weakly, but returns his focus to the stage.

“And your winner for Homecoming Queen is... Jane Hopper!”

Mike forces himself to clap for her. And while he feels sick, he can’t help but feel happy for her as she grins at receiving the crown on her head. She deserves so much.

But then he remembers the tradition of the King and Queen dancing together.

He’s forced to watch as El and Greg walk down to the dance floor as

people part to a circle.

“Fuck,” He says, not realizing he said that aloud.

“Oh man,” Max says. “Want me to fight him?”

“Yes, but don’t,” Mike holds an arm out to stop her as she lunges forward. “I just have to-”

It gets quiet, only people whispering as Greg holds a hand out to El as they stand in the circle of people, with their own Party (minus Will, since he has prom committee duties) on the outskirts.

But then he sees her cock her head and not take his hand.

“We’re supposed to dance,” Faintly, he hears Greg tell his girlfriend.

“Oh... Really?” She asks, just loud enough to be heard by everyone. “No thank you.” She takes off the crown and hands it up to Jennifer Hayes, who still stands onstage. Max laughs loudly, as Lucas whistles once, while people not their friends gasp and talk, scandalized.

Silently, El pushes back through the crowd and walks right up to Mike, and he realizes he’s grinning like an idiot.

“Hi,” She says.

“Do you want to dance?” He makes sure to ask her this time, extending his hand to her once more.

“Yes, please,” She says, and she takes his hand.

They go to find an open spot, and Dustin quickly claps him on the back as they do. The band plays “I Wanna Dance With Somebody” which has a bit more of a fast pace, but he holds her and dances with her like it’s a slow dance.

He hears people ‘whisper’ at them. “Can you believe that weirdo picked Frogface Wheeler to dance with?” He’s sure they say other things, but he’s too busy focusing on his girlfriend.

“Looks like I’m still a weirdo,” She says with a grin as they dance in a

sway.

Mike grins back, "More like Queen Weirdo now."

"Well," She says with a grandiose single-shoulder shrug. "We already knew that."

"I love you," He tells her, because he also loves telling her.

The grin goes from bright to soft, but the intensity is still there. "We knew that too."

He leans down and kisses her, in front of everyone.

"Do you remember that story," She says, keeping her voice low when their lips part before a chaperone could interrupt them. "The one where the princess kisses a frog?"

Mike nods.

"I think you just became a prince too," She says softly. "So, that means we're meant to be together. Right?"

"Oh, El," Mike says with a soap opera-dramatic flair, pulling her close so there's hardly any space between them. "We already knew that."